

R. Gleman
4474
INDUSTRY and LIBERALITY
recommended :

A
S E R M O N
PREACH'D at the
OLD JEWRY,
MARCH 7th, 1738-9.
TO THE
SOCIETY for RELIEF
OF THE
WIDOWS and ORPHANS
OF
DISSENTING MINISTERS.

By *SAMUEL WILSON.*

Publish'd at the Request of the MANAGERS of that Society.

L O N D O N,

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A C T S XX. 35.

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

 H E apostle Paul, though last call'd, or, as he beautifully expresses it, ** born out of due time*, came not a whit behind any of his brethren. An acquaintance with his writings must convince us, he was a man of extraordinary natural abilities, distinguish'd for the clearness of his understanding, the penetration of his judgment, the strength of his reasoning, and the propriety and force of his elocution. He was also a man of eminent grace, and shone in every part of the ministerial character.

* Cor. xv. 8.

B. 2

SOME-

SOMETIMES we find him thundering out threatenings against the ungodly, and impenitent, in language full of majestic terror; then in terms the most persuasive and alluring beseeching sinners to be reconcil'd: always pointing out Christ, as *God's salvation*; asserting the necessity and importance of that *faith*, to which the promise of eternal life is made; and of that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.* Nor was he more eminent for the purity of his doctrine, than for the sanctity and exemplariness of his life. Before his conversion he was beyond measure zealous for the rituals of the Mosaic dispensation, strictly adher'd to the traditions of the elders, and not chargeable with any instances of immorality. When God call'd him by his grace, the alteration of his principles prov'd no abatement, but a noble incentive to his pursuit of universal holiness. He acted now upon a new foundation, had other views and aims than *whilst in ignorance, and unbelief;* but so far was he from slackning in his course of obedience, that he rather press'd forward, always exercising himself to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man.

• Heb. xii. 14.

NAY,

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NAY, so far was he inflam'd with love to his master, so warmly attach'd to his cause and interest, that whilst he willingly suffered the loss of all things, submitting to bonds, imprisonment, and every kind of persecution from the enemies of christianity; he most generously quitted, what he might justly have demanded from his friends, according to the gospel constitution.

IT is his own observation, and delivered with proper solemnity, **Even so bath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.* And what more reasonable, than that men, who spend their strength and time in preparing and ministring spirituals, should be supplied with a competency from those, who desire and enjoy their labours? So that when he speaks of working with his hands, we are to remember, it was not of necessity but choice. Not that he had less right to an honourable provision from the churches, than other apostles; or, as if it would have been withheld, or sparingly administered, had he requir'd it: but lest it should be objected, he became a christian on mercenary principles, and that he might be the more

** 1 Cor. ix. 14.*

extensively

extensively useful, when men saw his disinterested conduct ; he determin'd to employ some hours in providing for his own necessities, whilst the rest were chearfully devoted to God and the publick.

IT is with a degree of elevation he calls it *his boasting* : not in a vain ostentatious way, which would have marr'd the service, and been a contradiction to the spirit and conduct of one so distinguish'd for humility ; but being highly delighted with, and greatly thankful for the mercy, that he had learn'd a trade in his youth, by an occasional attendance to which he was in a degree independent, and no ways burdensom to the churches, he speaks of it as *his boasting*, adding, *None should take it from him* : that is, he resolv'd to continue working with his hands, as long as he had opportunity.

NOR let any wonder that this should be a part of the apostle's education ; it being the common practice of the Jews, tho' bred up to learning, to acquaint themselves with some mechanic employ ; and that not only as an innocent amusement, but also as a means to support themselves in case of necessity. And

* 2 Cor. xi. 10.

the

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the apostle might think it proper to leave his own conduct in this respect, as an example to the elders of the church of Ephesus, since it is not impossible, that many of them, tho' not Jews, were before their conversion to christianity engaged in manual arts ; the extraordinary assistances at that time communicated to the church, rendering it not so necessary that the first preachers of the gospel should be called from the schools. And as christianity was then in its infancy, he would have these elders give no occasion either for the reproach of the enemy, or offence of the proselyte : the more they labour'd, the less they would have occasion to receive ; and the less they received, if sufficient, the better, as the case then stood.

THE term *weak*, in the text, is by most understood of such who were newly converted ; *weak in the faith*. And to support these, was to take away every thing which might occasion them to stumble, or give them offence, particularly in the matter of a minister's maintenance.

BUT if the word be taken more largely, for the *poor*, *helpless*, or *distress'd* (as it is sometimes us'd) the force of the apostle's argument will

will stand thus: " You are witnesses (my
" brethren) how I have acted by the space of
" three years; I have not enriched myself: I
" have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or
" apparel; but with great industry, under
" God, have maintained myself. Nor have I
" been wanting to shew you all things neces-
" sary for faith and practice; and among the
" rest, that you ought to do your utmost to
" have something to give to the necessities of
" others, as well as for your own support.
" Nor is this my advice alone, but especially
" remember the known maxim of our Lord,
" how often in his mouth, how much exem-
" plified in his behaviour, that, *it is more bles-*
" sed to give, than to receive. Suffer the word
" of exhortation; and be followers of me, as
" I would be of Christ." Taking the words in
this latitude, they give us occasion to observe:

I. THAT diligence in our calling, in a de-
pendance on providence, is the indispensa-
ble duty of every one who bears the
Christian name: he is to *labour*.

II. ONE great end of our labour, if God
crown it with success, should be, to have
it in our power to relieve the indigent,
and

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and help the weak and miserable : we are
to labour to support the weak.

III. THE command of God, the doctrine and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the many gracious promises left on record in his word, should have the weight of an indisputable authority, and the influence of an ingaging motive, to excite us to a chearful attendance to each of these : we are *to labour to support the weak, remembering the words of our Lord Jesus, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

I. WE begin with the first of these, That, industry in our calling, in a dependance on providence, is the indispensable duty of every one who calls himself a Christian : he is *to labour.*

NOTHING is more certain, than that God has sent no man into the world, as a mere spectator of the conduct of his fellow-creatures. Every one has something to do, something in secret with God his maker, who righteously claims a portion of our time, which is to be employ'd in adoring his matchless perfections,

B

confessing .

confessing our manifold transgressions, imploring forgiveness, and praising him for his goodness. To deny him this, is the worst of sacrilege. Nor are we cruelly to overlook our families, by restraining prayer, or neglecting to read the scriptures; but to bring up our ^f children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; instructing, admonishing, or reproofing the whole household, as occasion offers, whilst we lead them to a veneration for publick ordinances by our example and authority. These, and all other personal and relative duties of a religious nature, are diligently, and in the first place, to be attended to; and then, as we are differently station'd by the providence of God, the business of our calling is to be regarded. Nor is it so difficult to know what this is, as carefully and prudently to attend it.

MANY, to their cost, have gone out of God's way. Some through covetousness launching beyond their depth, have fallen into ^g many foolish and hurtful snares, to their own infamy, and the impoverishing their posterity. Others live above their circumstances, and leaving all to the care of servants, waste their time,

^f Eph. vi. 4.

^g 1 Tim. vi. 9.

health,

health, and estates, in a criminal indolence, or unbounded luxury. And others again are continually shifting the scene, till by a restless variety they bring all into ruin or confusion.

ALLOWANCE, indeed, is to be made now and then for an extraordinary genius, wrongly determin'd through the ignorance or prejudice of parents, who too often consult their own humour, rather than the capacity or inclination of their children. Some of these have broke from the confinement of trade, and after an intense application to a particular branch of science, become serviceable to the publick, and met with the just reward of applause and advancement. In common, however, the apostolic advice is to be attended to, ^h *Let every man abide in the same calling, wherein he was called.* Not as one who has nothing to do, or may be careless, and negligent; but exerting himself to the utmost, applying to every part of it with care and sedulity, rememb'ren he works under the eye of a master, who will 'ere long call him to a strict account. And where is the inconsistency of this, with casting our care on the Lord, and taking no anxious

^h 1 Cor. vii. 20.

thought for the morrow? Is it not absurd, and impious to the last degree, to pretend a dependance on providence, in a neglect of our duty? We may be assur'd the slothful servant will find no account in misunderstanding, or wrongly applying, the parables of the ¹ lillies, or ravens; for God has made no promises to the sluggard, and far be it from him to work miracles for the indolent.

IT was part of the curse which followed on man's disobedience, but has now the force of a command, ^k *In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.* Not that every man is call'd to labour alike in the same employment, or to an equal degree. To see a dictator at the plough, or a senator with his spade, might not be so pleasing in the present age, as in the infancy of Rome. Nor dare I say, with a Rabbi of the Jews, "He that teacheth not his son a trade, " "learns him to be a thief." But this I may affirm, that the greatest personage on earth is a steward to the God of heaven, and oblig'd so far to inspect his affairs, that while he is injurious to none, there may, by a prudent oeconomy, be a surplusage for the interest of religion,

¹ Math. vi. 28. Luke xii. 24. ^k Gen. iii. 19.

and

and the support of the poor. Nor is it any ways beneath him, when at leisure from the important concerns of his high station, personally to intend the application of his charity ; or where this cannot be done, to inquire into the accounts and conduct of the almoners of his bounty, approving or censuring as the case may require.

SOME persons, either from pride or indolence, would be thought above looking into their own affairs ; 'till having outliv'd their estates, they are deservedly stung with the mortification of seeing their stewards in better circumstances than themselves. It's an observation of the Wiseman, ¹ *He that is slothful in business, is brother to him that is a great waster.* And how lively are his images in describing the field of a man void of understanding, as ^m *overgrown with thorns, cover'd with nettles, and the walls broke down;* whilst the yawning sluggard is insensible that poverty is hastning with the speed of a traveller, and want ready to seize him with the force of an armed man ? ⁿ *Abundance of idleness, is called the sin of Sodom;* and 'tis mention'd as her reproach, that in the fulness of bread, *she strengthned not the*

¹ Prov. xviii. 9. ^m Prov. xxiv. 30. ⁿ Ezek. xvi. 49.

band of the poor. The apostle supposes sloth to be one main spring of fraud, and rapine ; hence he says, ^o *Let him that stole, steal no more ; but rather let him labour, working with his bands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Nay so zealous was he in this matter, that he expressly commands, ^p *If any will not work, neither let him eat.* So that we must throw up the christian character, if we are slothful in busines ; nor will the pretence of being ever so fervent in spirit, be admitted in the face of a positive precept, so often inculcated, and so strongly inforc'd.

IF it should be ask'd, to what end is all this diligence ? to inrich ourselves ? to aggrandize our families ? or to gratify our sensual appetites, and inclinations ? Were this all, I confess the argument would greatly abate in its force ; since the world, and every thing belonging to it, is passing away : we and our offspring must shortly lie down in the dust, altogether uncertain who will come after us. So that we must look farther, to something more worthy of our industry ; which leads me to our second head, that

^o 1 Eph. iv. 28. ^p 2 Thes. iii. 10.

II. THE desire and design of a good man, in a diligent attendance to his calling, is to have it in his power, as far as providence crowns him with success, to supply the indigent, and help the weak and miserable : he labours, *that he may support the weak.*

MAN is not born for himself only : he is a member of the publick, and ought to do all the good he can. To neglect his own family, would be to ^p deny the faith, and be worse than an infidel ; and absolutely to confine himself to it, would discover a narrowness of spirit reproachful to christianity. It enters into the character of the man, whom the Lord will bless, that ^q *He sheweth mercy, disperses, and gives to the poor.* To neglect this, in the judgment of Job, is an iniquity most provoking to the Almighty, and exceedingly dangerous in its consequence. Hence he breaks out into that solemn and pathetick appeal ; ^r *If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caus'd the eyes of the widow to fail ; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I*

^p 1 Tim. v. 8. ^q Ps. xii. v. 6. ^r Job xxxi. 16. 17. 18, &c.

have guided her from my mother's womb) if I have seen any perish for want of cloathing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warm'd with the fleece of my sheep: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.

BUT among the many miserable objects, who incompass a good man, calling loudly for his compassion, in the midst of his solicitude to relieve them all, he is particularly careful to shew kindness to the household of faith; remembering these not merely as his fellow-creatures, but his brethren, children of one father, members of the same body, and heirs of the same glory. This with the consideration of the friendly notice, which Christ takes, of the kind offices done to his people, awakens his application to business, and encourages him under the fatigue of it. The breathings of the liberal man, devising liberal things, are, "O that the Lord would bless me, and "smile on my endeavours, that it may be in "my hand, as well as my heart, to be "beneficent to all, and generous to my fellow- "christians." Their distress he observes with the greatest concern; his soul enters into their trouble

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trouble, sympathises with them, and is often deeply afflicted, that their relief is not within the compass of his power.

Nor is he limited in his charity to persons of his own sentiments, or denomination. Wherever he sees a good man, he loves him ; and how much soever he may judge him mistaken in other matters, his uprightness and integrity secure him an interest in his benevolence. And tho' others may treat the ministerial character with insults and contempt ; the serious Christian rightly distinguishing between the true shepherds and mere mercenaries, between those who adorn, or bring a scandal on their profession, looks on every faithful ambassador of Christ with a degree of reverence, and cheerfully contributes what is necessary to render him easy and comfortable. It is a sad truth, that many of these servants of the Most High God are in very low and distressed circumstances. This arises sometimes from the inability of those among whom they labour. The society, how willing soever to assist, is restrained by poverty ; and the exhibition, tho' far short of a sufficient supply, is to the utmost of their capacity. And where this may not be the case, any one will readily judge, that a maintainance depending on a voluntary

C subscription

subscription is subject to frequent alterations, through the death of some, or alteration in their circumstances, and the unsteady humour, or avarice of others. At best, I believe, very few instances excepted, a minister's salary among Protestant Dissenters will, even with the most prudent management, when the charges of the family are defrayed, admit of laying up a very little, if any thing, for his widow and children. A very mournful consideration ! and which may well set heavy on the mind of an affectionate husband, and tender father, when by death oblig'd to take leave of his family so sadly unprovided for.

AND as with the minister, for the most part, dies his income, and the church is under a necessity of entring into new ingagements by a fresh choice ; it too often happens that the family of the deceas'd is overlook'd, or treated with a criminal indifference. With great pleasure indeed I observe, that it is not always so ; some of our congregations have distinguish'd themselves, in the handsom provision they have made for their minister's widows and orphans, and I wish it were more general. But where nothing of this kind is or can be done, which is usually the case ; who can we think
of

of as more proper objects of our compassion, than the families of those, who have spent their days and strength in shewing to us the way of salvation? These are certainly some of the *weak* we are *to labour to support*. Nor will they be overlook'd by those, who are appris'd of the importance and advantage of a gospel ministry; which leads me to observe,

III. THAT the command of God, the doctrine and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the many gracious promises left on record in his word, oblige and encourage us to industry in our calling, and liberality in our helping the needy: *We are to labour, to support the weak, remembering the saying of our Lord, that 'tis more blessed to give, than to receive.*

IT is a great mistake, to imagine we are at liberty in this matter, and may communicate or refuse at pleasure. We are to judge indeed of the nature of the call, and our ability to answer it; but where there can be no debate as to either of these, we dishonour God, by despising his authority, if we refuse to comply. *If there be among you a poor man, says*

^f Deut. xv. 7, 8, 10, 11.

the Lord by Moses to his people Israel, of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand, from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto; for the poor shall never cease out of the land. Therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and thy needy, in thy land. And the apostle with great authority binds it on Timothy, and all the ministers of the gospel, not only to intreat, but to charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

NOR will a profession of the greatest sympathy or kindness be accepted, whilst we refuse them relief. For, as the apostle James observes, If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto

² 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. ^v James ii. 15, 16.

them,

them, *Depart in peace, be ye warm'd, and filled,*
notwithstanding ye give them not those things which
are needful to the body; what doth it profit?
 It is little less than an insult on their misery,
 and will be resented as such by their judge.
 And, according to the reasoning of another
 apostle, that man is destitute of love to God,
"who having this world's good, and seeth his
brother in want, and shutteth up his bowels of
compassion from him.

AND as God is good unto all, and requires
 we should follow his example; so he has taken
 particular notice of the widow, and father-
 less. Whoever shall afflict or injure them, he
 has ingag'd to be their advocate and judge.
 Nor does he threaten sorcerers or adulterers
 with a more heavy or swift destruction, than
 those, ** who oppress the hireling in his wages,*
the widow, and the fatherless. He stiles him-
 self, ** a father of the fatherless, and a judge of*
the widow. And it is observable, that in the
** Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the*
widow, were to come and eat, and be satisfied;

** 1 John iii. 17. * Mal. iii. 5. ⁷ Psal. lxxiii. 5. * Deut.*
xiv. 29.

if the master of the house expected that the *Lord his God should bless him, and the work of his hand.* In ^a cutting down their harvest, they were not to make clean riddance, nor wholly reap the corners of the field ; and if by accident a sheaf was overlook'd, it must remain ; nor might they glean their vineyard, nor in beating their olive-tree go over the boughs twice. All these were to be left for the stranger, the fatherless, and widow, under a promise, that God would more than make it up by his blessing on them, and all the work of their hands. And where these things were carefully attended to, God allowed the humble claim of his people, that he would remember his word, and be faithful to his ingagement. Remarkable to this purpose is that passage, ^b *When thou hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled ; then thou shalt say before the Lord, I have given to the Levite, &c. according to thy commandment : look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us.*

^a Lev. xix. 9. chap. xxiii. 22. Deut. xxiv. 19, 20. ^b Deut. xxvi. 12, 13, 15.

IN this manner, and to this degree, did God require and encourage a charitable disposition in his people of old: nor must their liberality in providing the costly materials of the tabernacle and temple be overlook'd; in the former of which they were hardly restrain'd by a divine command, and the expence of the latter is not easily computed. But what is all this to that godlike disposition in assisting the miserable, exemplify'd in the whole conduct of our blessed Saviour? ⁴ *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus; who, tho' rich in himself, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.* From lying in the bosom of his father, ador'd by angels from the moment of their creation, possessed of all the perfections of deity; at length, laying aside the robes of his glory, he took flesh (an instance big with mysterious wonder) and submitted to poverty, reproach, and every kind of persecution. And when he could have frown'd a malicious injurious world into hell, he meekly bore the worst of usage, continually going about doing good. And tho' he had neither silver nor gold to bestow on the indigent; it was more than

⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 9.

made up by the excellence of his doctrine, and the usefulness of his miracles, by healing every kind of disease, feeding the fainting multitude at the expence of omnipotence ; and, as the noblest expression of his love, at last laying down his life for his enemies. And whilst they cried, *Let his blood be on us and our children,* and insulted him with cruel mockings, he resign'd as a lamb to the slaughter, and fervently pray'd, *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.* And when his mistaken disciples once tempted him to resent an affront, in the immediate ruin of the offenders, he rebuk'd them with this compassionate reproof ; *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ; the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.*

AT the tomb of his friend we find him in tears ; nor could he refrain, when looking on Jerusalem. He well knew what its inhabitants had deserv'd, and that they would fill up the measure of their iniquity, in imbruining their hands in his blood, and rejecting the gospel ; yet the prospect of their approaching desolation drew out with tears, that affectionate

* Luke xxiii. 34.

f Luke xix. 55, 56.

remonstrance : ⁵ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes.

AND though his exalted state, at the father's right-hand, is inconsistent with the least ruffle or discomposure, we have the strongest assurance, that he retains the most tender sentiments of his peoples sufferings. He is an high-priest, who is touch'd with a feeling of their infirmities ; every injury offer'd to them is regarded by him as an instance of persecution directed against himself ; and whoever toucheth them, touches the apple of his eye. He is never wanting in a rich supply of every necessary blessing : while he pleads for them in heaven, he guides, supports, defends, and comforts them on earth ; their life is bound up with his, and he will sooner exhaust all the treasures of grace and glory, than any thing should be wanting to constitute and compleat their happiness. O astonishing love, without precedent, or parallel ! No wonder then, the apostle should make it his darling motive, in recommending the amiable grace

⁶ Luke xix. 41. 42.

of loving and forgiving one another. Well might he say, ^b *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you: and walk in love; as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us.*

THE primitive Christians strictly copied after this great example. As their life was made up of devotion to God, and a lively faith in the great Mediator, they were conspicuous for fervent affection to one another; no one counted any thing his own, when the good of the community, or the necessities of his fellow Christians call'd for it. Of some of them the apostle bears witness, that they communicated not to their ability only, but even beyond it; chusing rather to be straitned themselves, than their brethren should want. And 'tis observable, the office of deacons took its rise from the necessities of certain widows, for whose sustenance the Holy Ghost thought fit to appoint persons, whose standing businesse it should be to visit and take care of them, with the rest of the poor. And we all know, how

^b Eph. iv. 31, 32. Chap. v. 2.

an instance of prevarication, in a pretended exhibition to the publick stock, was punish'd with an awful severity; so well did God approve the generosity of his servants, and so highly resent the dissimulation and avarice of the hypocrite.

SOMETHING of this spirit has, to the honour of the saints, discovered itself in succeeding ages; and I promise myself, the conduct of this day will be an agreeable proof, that 'tis far from being extinct. Sure I am, the promises of the gospel are yet in force; and if a sense of duty and gratitude to God, interest, honour, and pleasure to ourselves; if mercies personal, relative, spiritual, temporal, or eternal, have any influence upon us; we shall not be wanting. Give me leave then to mention a few passages, any one of which, if the authority of heaven is regarded, may prompt us to be ready to do good and communicate.

Blessed, says the Psalmist, is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble, the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; the Lord will deliver him from the will of his

¹ Psal. xli. 42. Prov. iii. 10. Prov. xix. 17.

enemies. Honour the Lord with thy substance, is the advice of Solomon ; and the promise is, *so shall thy barns be filled, and thy presses burst out with new wine.* And the obligation on God's part is exceeding strong, when he adds, *He that bath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.*

So thoroughly was he perswaded of this, that he says, *He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack.* And on this he founds that exhortation, ^k *Cast thy bread on the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be on the earth.*

THE prophet Isaiah, with a peculiar elegance, introduces the Lord complaining of the hypocritical fasts of oppressing covetous persons : ^k *Is this the fast I have chosen? Is it for a man to hang down his head like a bulrush? No, it is to deal thy bread to the hungry, to cloath the naked, and not to bide thyself from thine own flesh.* Then the promise may be hoped for, that *thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thy*

^k Eccles. xi. 1, 2. ^l Isa. lviii. 5, 7, 8, 10, 11.

health spring forth speedily. And, if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy thee afflicted, the Lord stands ingaged to guide thee continually, to satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones ; then shalt thou be like a water'd garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And with a marvellous condescension God says by the prophet Malachi, ^m Bring ye the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Nay, our Lord assures us, that ⁿ a cup of cold water, given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. And there is something beyond expression ingaging, in his representation of the honourable regard he will shew in the day of judgment to every friendly office done to his poor members : ^o Inasmuch, says he, as ye have done it to the least, of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Hence the apostle calls it, laying up in store a good foundation ; and, as you have heard in an excellent discourse on this occasion, ^p With such sacrifices God is well pleas'd. We may

^m Mal. iii. 10, 11. ⁿ Matth. x. 42. ^o Matth. xxv. 40.

^p See the Rev. Mr. Miles's sermon on Heb. xiv. 16.

safely.

safely trust him then, [¶]for he will not be unrighteous to forget our labour of love. These, and many more of the same kind, are the precious promises which God has left on record to excite us to do all the good in our power. Nor is there the least room for suspicion as to their accomplishment: [¶]He is not a man, that he should lie; [¶]or alter the thing which is gone out of his lips.

WHAT remains then, but that I briefly state the case before us; and if it speaks for itself, as I think it must do, with every serious mind, we shall have the less occasion, by argument to press you to attend to it. And here give me leave to pause, and adore the good providence of God, that it should enter into the hearts of his servants, to be concern'd not only for poor dissenting ministers, who have long and largely partook of their bounty; but at the same time also, to cast an eye of pity on the distress'd families of those who have finished their work, and enter'd on their reward. This surely was of the Lord, and let him have the glory. And with a great deal of pleasure I add, that the whole

[¶] Heb. vi. 10. [¶] Numb. xxiii. 19. [¶] Psalm lxxxix. 34.

scheme is built on the most catholick principle; no distinction as to denomination, but the most distressed objects are to be first regarded. Here is something for the widow, something for the fatherless; the latter prudently given, when it is likely to be most serviceable, to put them to trades, or cloath them for service. And should I not offend those who take more pleasure in doing good, than being told of it; gratitude would oblige me and every subscriber who is acquainted with their conduct, to return our united and hearty thanks to those worthy gentlemen, who have discharged the trust committed to them with the strictest impartiality, prudence, and unanimity. May the God of heaven return the kindness in a rich effusion of blessings of every kind; and whilst their offspring feel the advantage of their parents generosity, may they imitate their conduct, and be ready to every good work.

HITHER TO the design, blessed be God, has met with all desirable success; and I doubt not but as it is more known, it will proportionably increase. For it must argue a very unchristian and ungenerous disposition, to be deaf to the importunity of the widow, and harden ourselves

ourselves against the cry of the orphan ; who the more unskilful and helpless they are, the less us'd to hardships and difficulties, the more they bespeak our compassion. Sure I am, this must be the sentiment of that sex whose distinguishing ornament is *tenderness* and *compassion* ; and accordingly I promise myself much this day from the liberality of our good and honourable women. It is with a great deal of pleasure I find, many of their names in the list of subscribers, and doubt not their example and persuasion will influence others to follow them.

SOME of you very probably have been ready to envy those excellent women, whose names are recorded with honour for ministering to our Lord of their substance, and would gladly imitate them, were he now on earth, and in like circumstances. He is gone indeed into heaven, and wants no more such services ; but a part of him is left behind, and whatever is done to them, he accepts as done to himself. Who of us all, my friends, could without the deepest concern, see the family of a faithful minister of Christ, whom we lov'd and honour'd, and under whose labours we have sat with pleasure and advantage, broke up at his death,

death, and both his widow and children reduced to the greatest distress? Methinks so affecting a sight must impress the most obdurate mind, and almost tempt one to say, that man is no Christian, who upon so moving an occasion, would not contribute his utmost to redress it. Forgive me then, if I promise myself, as the present case is extraordinary, that we shall all exert ourselves this day, and vie with each other in generosity.

You know the rule, it should be *as the Lord hath blessed us*, according to our ability; conscience, and prudence are to determine the proportion. Nor is it to be of constraint, as extorted; but willingly, for *God loves a cheerful giver*. And whatever of this kind is done, it is to be *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; and our services, as well as persons, will find acceptance only in the Beloved.

How far the inhabitants of heaven are appris'd of our conduct on earth, cannot certainly be determined. Sure we are the angels rejoice in the conversion of sinners. And if those ministering spirits, who attend the church here below, when their commission is discharg'd,

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make their report of what they observe ; who would not indeavour to increase the pleasure and heighten the triumph of that benevolent assembly above, who are gone before us ? Some of these sacred ministers are perhaps waiting here this day, wishing well to the good design, and ready to wing their way with an account of its success : God grant it may be to your honour.

WHY should we hesitate on so moving an occasion to part with a little of our substance ? Is not the whole God's property ? Do we not enjoy our all by his leave, and on the single tenure of his sovereign pleasure ? Are we not accountable for our talents ? Cannot God supply our wants ? Has he been to us a hard master ? Will it not yield present pleasure, and peace in the reflection ? Is it not more honourable, nay Godlike, to give, than to receive ? Away then with all excuses : may both your hearts and hands be open. Some of you have not perhaps contributed any thing as yet to this charity, and who of us may live to a returning year, we know not ; let us not then sow sparingly, but with the liberal man do liberal things,

AND

AND now, my honoured friends, let us suppose the day of judgment to be at hand ; that we heard the trump of God, the awful sound, *'Behold the Bridegroom's come, prepare to meet your Judge !'* Suppose we saw him coming in the clouds of heaven, inthron'd in glory, attended by a bright retinue of angels ; and that we heard him say, in the midst of that wondering throng, “ Where is the gene-
“ rous saint, whose care and delight it has been
“ to visit and relieve the widow and father-
“ less ; bring him first, load him with double
“ honour ; *Come, thou blessed of my Father,* I
“ was with thee, and beheld the victory,
“ which grace obtained over unbelief and ava-
“ rice. I saw thy hand more filled than at
“ first intended ; I well remember thy benefi-
“ cence on every occasion, and have carefully
“ minuted the particulars of thy kindness ; and
“ now if there is enough in me, in my father,
“ to make thee happy, possess it in all its full-
“ ness, in all its sweetnes : *Inherit the king-
“ dom prepared for thee.*” Who would not then
be ambitious of this honour, and rather part
with his all, than not share in this exalted
Glory ?

⁸ Math. xxv. 34.

To conclude, may the God of all grace, the father of mercies, draw out your hearts in this service, that the blessing of thofe who are ready to perish, may come upon you ; and while you make the heart of the widow rejoice, may he blefs you in your basket, and in your store, in your persons, your offspring, and relations ; and when you have serv'd your generation, may you be receiv'd to glory, and enjoy the recompence of the just, among thofe to whom the Judge will say, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord.*

v Math. xxv. 21.

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